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Chapter 1: Introduction

What does it mean to be a trusted source for news and information for Northeast Ohio?

The purpose of this document is to elaborate on what it means to “provide consistently high quality public service programming presented *with integrity*.” Maintaining the integrity of WKSU is the responsibility of each and every staff member. This policy is an effort to articulate the staff’s shared values and standards that make up the station’s integrity.

This document applies specifically to every WKSU journalist and member of the programming staff. This includes all full-time professional members of the newsroom, the station’s program director, part-time announcers, freelance contributors and all students working as interns in the newsroom. While WKSU’s journalists share a special responsibility to abide by these values and standards, they will serve as a guideline for all staff members for any situation in which they could be seen as representing the station

WKSU owes a debt of gratitude to Brent Wolfe at WUNC who shared his station’s ethics policy on which this one is closely based. Material for WUNC’s report was drawn from a number of sources including (but not limited to) National Public Radio, The New York Times, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, and the Society of Professional Journalists. Many of the provisions in this ethics policy are in theirs as well; there are some instances where the same language has been adopted from others because their wording was just right. WKSU also needs to acknowledge Vince Duffy at Michigan Radio who shared a draft of his organization’s ethics policy, also based on WUNC’s. Thanks also to Helen Barrington for sharing New England Public Radio’s “General Tenets and Operating Principles for WFCR” and KCUR for sharing its “Statement of Editorial Integrity.” Other stations’ policies including WOSU and Arizona Public Radio were reviewed in crafting this policy.

The process for developing and implementing this policy included consultation with the station’s Management Team and the university’s office of University Relations. WKSU staff was given the opportunity to comment on a draft version, and the staff’s feedback was useful in developing the final document.

No ethics policy can cover every situation and this policy is not intended to be a complete set of rules and regulations. Rather, it is a set of guidelines and a statement of shared values. When uncertainty arises about the application of these guidelines, the primary goal always should be to protect the station’s integrity. When in doubt, employees should not be shy about asking questions. A robust, ongoing discussion of ethics at all levels of the station is essential to producing consistently high quality public service programming.

Note: When this policy stipulates that written permission is required from a supervisor or station management, an email message will suffice as written permission.

Chapter 2: Fairness and Truth

There are several defining terms of what constitutes fairness at WKSU. They concern the way our programming relates to the subject matter of our on-air work, to the people we deal with while creating our stories, and to the audience which hears them.

1. *Fair* means that WKSU presents all relevant views on a subject, and treats them even-handedly. The range of views may be encompassed in a single story on a controversial topic, or it may play out over a body of coverage or series of commentaries. At all times, the commitment to presenting all important views must be conscious and affirmative.

2. *Unbiased* means that the journalists at WKSU recognize and separate their personal opinions – such as an individual's religious beliefs or political ideology – from the subjects they are covering. WKSU's journalists do not approach any coverage with overt or hidden agendas.

3. *Accurate* means that each day WKSU makes rigorous efforts at all levels of the newsgathering and programming process to ensure its facts are not only right but also presented in the correct context. WKSU journalists attempt to verify what their sources and the officials they interview tell them when the material involved is argumentative or capable of different interpretations. They report statements as facts only when they are reasonably satisfied of their accuracy. They guard against errors of omission that cause a story to misinform WKSU's listeners by failing to be complete. They make sure that their language accurately describes the facts and does not imply a fact they have not confirmed.

4. *Honest* means WKSU journalists do not deceive the people or institutions they cover about their identity or intentions in their process of gathering stories, and they do not deceive WKSU's listeners once they have the stories in hand. They do not deceive their listeners by presenting the work of others as their own (plagiarism), by editing interviews in ways that distort their meaning, or by manipulating audio in a way that distorts its meaning, how it was obtained or when it was obtained. The same applies to photographs posted by WKSU journalists. Honesty means owning up publicly to what WKSU has aired and acting quickly to rectify mistakes WKSU journalists make on air and/on the station's website.

5. *Respectful* means treating the people WKSU journalists cover and the station's listeners with regard, by recognizing the diversity of the country and world on which WKSU journalists report, and the diversity of interests, attitudes and experiences of WKSU's audience. WKSU journalists approach subjects in an open-minded, sensitive and civil way. They must treat the people they cover fairly and with respect. They always keep in mind that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort and weigh that against the importance of the story. WKSU journalists show sensitivity when seeking or using interviews of those affected by tragedy or grief. They show special sensitivity when dealing with children and inexperienced or unsophisticated sources or

subjects, or individuals who have difficulty understanding the language in which they are being interviewed.

Chapter 3: Sources

WKSU puts its highest value on firsthand news gathering and confirmation of facts, as opposed to relying on material from other sources (Newspapers, television stations, networks, etc.)

Plagiarism is an offense that can result in immediate termination. WKSU journalists do not take other people's work and present it as our own.

1. *Crediting sources*: WKSU journalists must take special care in the use they make of information from wire service stories, reports by other broadcast news organizations, newspapers, articles in other publications, or online sources. No material from another source should ever be included verbatim, or substantially so, without attribution. WKSU journalists should give credit to other news organizations for stories that demonstrate enterprise or contain exclusive information. If there is any doubt about whether to credit another news organization, check with the News Director or his/her designee.

Note: Wire services is one category where it is acceptable to use material without attribution, but only if the wire service is the originator of the story. If its copy is simply a rewrite of material from another organization and includes attribution, you must still include that credit.

When using material from newspaper stories, WKSU journalists must double-check "facts" and other material gleaned from those stories. Too often, incorrect information is passed down from one news story to another because of the failure of one news organization to get it right. WKSU should never pass on errors in this way. WKSU's corrections policy is to correct substantive errors of fact in a timely way. If a reporter, host, editor or producer believes WKSU got something wrong – or that there was a serious defect in a piece – s/he has an affirmative responsibility to get that defect or error on the table for investigation and possible correction. Many times WKSU learns these things when someone outside brings an error to the station's attention. But if WKSU journalists have reason to believe there was a significant error, they should not wait for it to be pointed out. WKSU journalists should check corrections, clarifications or retractions with the News Director and/or Program Director before they air or are posted online if there is any possibility the material in question poses a legal liability.

2. *Minors*: Dealing with minors (defined as anyone under the age of 18) always invokes legal issues. An interview of a minor about any subject requires WKSU journalists to secure written permission from the minor's parent or legal guardian. An interview of a minor in a special custodial situation, such as foster care, juvenile detention, or holding facilities for illegal immigrants, requires the consent of the person who has custody of the minor.

Any interview on school premises will also require the consent of the school authorities. All consent, both parental and school consent, should be in writing and provided to the news director before the story is approved for broadcast, publishing online, or on social.

WKSU's policy is to use the NPR consent form (available in English, Spanish and French) for parents, and the WKSU consent form for a school.

If a minor is a witness to a crime, the WKSU journalist must weigh carefully whether they are exposing the minor to physical risk by identifying him or her by name as a potential witness, and whether there is potential for the minor to be accused as a participant. If the reporter wants to use the minor without giving the minor's name, that must be expressly approved by the news director.

Breaking news situations like school shootings require special care when interviewing visibly distressed minors who may have witnessed horrific scenes. Witnesses such as teachers or students over 18 are preferable interviewees. If continued interviewing substantially increases the distress of a minor who is a witness, the WKSU journalist should carefully balance the importance and quality of the information being obtained with the interviewee's emotional state and decide whether respect for the witness requires the interview to be ended. WKSU journalists must also discuss with their supervisor whether that interview should be aired.

In cases where there is even a hint of doubt about whether to get consent, the WKSU journalist should consult with their supervisor.

In all cases where written consent is required, WKSU reporters must hold onto a copy and provide the original consent form to the News Director for the station's files. The news director will create a digital copy to be available to station management, and keep all digital copies in perpetuity. These digital copies will be stored on the WKSU computer network at N:\NEWS\Consent Forms.

Minors accused of a crime: WKSU journalists follow the guidance of the AP Stylebook in avoiding naming or revealing the identity of minors accused of a crime. Exceptions may be made in the following cases: based on the severity of a crime, whether the juvenile's identity has been formally released by the authorities, the severity of the crime, the threat to public safety or the fact that the juvenile's identity is de factor public knowledge. Any instance of identifying a juvenile must be approved by the News Director or his/her designee.

3. *Privacy:* WKSU journalists think carefully about the boundaries between legitimate journalistic pursuit and an individual's right to privacy. WKSU recognizes that private people have a greater right to control information about themselves than do public officials and others who seek power, influence or attention. Only an overriding public need to know can justify intrusion into anyone's privacy.

4. *Actualities:* WKSU journalists make sure actualities, quotes or paraphrases of the people they interview are accurate and are used in the proper context. An actuality from an interviewee or speaker should reflect accurately what that person was asked or was responding to. Elected officials and those in positions of governmental authority should not be internally edited. If a WKSU journalist uses tape or material from an earlier story, they clearly identify it as such. WKSU will tell listeners about the circumstances of an

interview if that information is pertinent (such as the time the interview took place, the fact that an interviewee was speaking to us while on the fly, etc.). Whenever it's not clear how an interview was obtained, WKSU should make it clear. The audience deserves more information, not less. The burden is on WKSU journalists to ensure that the use of such material is true to the meaning the speaker intended.

5. *Representing ourselves*: Journalism should be conducted in the open. WKSU journalists must always identify themselves and their objectives clearly. It is not enough to wear press credentials, carry a microphone and recorder or other equipment and assume that it's obvious they are a member of the press. WKSU reporters do not misrepresent themselves and should not pose as anyone other than themselves.

6. *Hidden microphones*: WKSU journalists do not use hidden microphones, recorders or cameras except in unusual circumstances. Occasionally information that serves an important journalistic purpose, such as in reporting on illegal, antisocial or fraudulent activities, cannot be obtained by more open means. In such circumstances, written approval must be obtained from the News Director before any undisclosed taping or photographing takes place. Although Ohio is a one-party consent state, WKSU journalists do not record phone calls without first notifying the people with whom they're talking on the phone.

7. *Legality*: If there is a question of legality in pursuit of a story, WKSU journalists should consult the News Director and Program Director immediately so that they can bring the issue to the attention of the station's legal counsel.

8. *Paying sources*: WKSU journalists do not pay for information from sources or newsmakers.

9. *Non-disclosure agreements and embargoes*: WKSU journalists do not sign non-disclosure agreements. WKSU journalists respect embargoes on news unless the circumstances surrounding the embargo make adherence to it inappropriate, such as where the information is commonly available or a strong public interest requires the disclosure to place other news in the proper context.

10. *On the record*: According to the AP Stylebook, "the information can be used with no caveats, quoting the source by name." A reporter or host should make clear when an interview has begun or has ended so there is no question about what is or isn't for broadcast, or what is on the record or not.

11. *Off the record*: According to the AP Stylebook, off the record "cannot be used for publication." This means it cannot be used, either on the air or in further reporting. Off-the-record should be determined before the source begins. WKSU journalists must be very careful when dealing with sources who say they want to be "off the record." If they mean "not for attribution to me," WKSU journalists need to explain the difference, and discuss what the attribution will actually be. This information should be wholly independently verified.

An example of off-the-record is a source who does not want to be quoted about their company for fear of being fired from their job, but wants to help advance the story.

12. *On background*: The AP Stylebook lists this as “information which can be published but only under certain conditions negotiated with the source.” This typically pertains to sources who don’t want to use their names but are willing to be identified by their position. In all instances, WKSU Journalists should work vigorously to convince the source to go “on the record.”

13. *For Guidance*: One alternative to off-the-record is “for guidance.” A source may be willing to give WKSU journalists information for guidance or to prompt further reporting, on the understanding that the comments will not be used as the basis for putting something on the air. This, for example, was the relationship between “Deep Throat” and Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein. Such guidance can be useful even if it can't be broadcast all at once.

14. *Anonymous sources*: Anonymous sources should only be used when there is no other way to get the information. The information should be significant. Journalists should not grant confidentiality if the information is trivial. A supervisor must give written approval before a WKSU journalist grants confidentiality to a source. The supervisor has an obligation to satisfy him/herself that the source is credible and reliable, and there is a journalistically justifiable reason to let that person speak without attribution. This obligation also holds where individuals ask that their real names be withheld. The editor or producer has a twofold responsibility: (a) to judge whether anonymity (or a pseudonym) is justifiable, and (b) to satisfy him/herself that this person is who the piece says s/he is. No one should ever be in the position of having to verify these matters after a story has aired. If a pseudonym is used, the reporter must disclose this in the story.

Before granting confidentiality, it must be clear that the WKSU journalist may reveal the source’s identity and information to supervisors and possibly to the station’s legal counsel. The agreement to keep a source confidential should be premised on truthfulness. If the source lies, the confidentiality agreement will be considered void. Anonymous sources will not be allowed to make personal attacks on others and remain anonymous. WKSU journalists must make these policies clear to sources before entering into a confidentiality agreement. This should be provided to the source in writing.

The shield law statute for broadcasters in Ohio’s Revised code (Ohio Revised Code § 2739.04) states: No person engaged in the work of, or connected with, or employed by any noncommercial educational or commercial radio broadcasting station, or any noncommercial educational or commercial television broadcasting station, or network of such stations, for the purpose of gathering, procuring, compiling, editing, disseminating, publishing, or broadcasting news shall be required to disclose the source of any information procured or obtained by such person in the course of his employment, in any legal proceeding, trial, or investigation before any court, grand jury, petit jury, or any officer thereof, before the presiding officer or any tribunal, or his agent, or before any

commission, department division, or bureau of this state, or before any county or municipal body, officer, or committee thereof. (<http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/2739.04>)

15. *"Sources say"*: When WKSU journalists attribute information in a story to a "source" or "sources," it is assumed that these are the sources of WKSU journalists and that they have obtained the information firsthand. If this is not the case, and the sources are ones quoted by other news organizations, then those sources must be attributed to those organizations. WKSU journalists must provide the identity of their sources to their editor.

16. *Previewing scripts*: WKSU journalists do not show scripts in advance or preview pieces to any person not affiliated with WKSU. WKSU journalists may review portions of a script or read back a quotation to assure accuracy. WKSU journalists may also play audio or read transcripts of an interview to a third party if the purpose is to get that party's reaction to what another person has said. WKSU journalists may discuss potential topics to be covered with a source before an interview but will not submit a list of questions. It should also be clear that WKSU journalists will not necessarily limit themselves to those issues. WKSU journalists do not allow sources or interviewees to dictate how a topic will be covered, or which other voices or ideas will be included.

17. *Interpreters*: WKSU journalists should hire their own interpreter or translator whenever possible, if the journalist does not speak the language in question fluently. It's best to have the interpreter and interview subject present at the same time for broadcast or recording. If a WKSU journalist uses an interpreter who knows the interview subject (such as a family member or advocate), this should be indicated in the story or interview. The interpreter will be paid for by WKSU and this should be approved by the news director or program director before the interpreter is hired.

18. *Audio archives*: Archival audio or audio that was obtained from a past story must be identified as such if it is used in a new piece. The listener should not be left to think that any archival or previously obtained audio was gathered in the context of the current piece. As an example, a story updating a controversy surrounding an individual would be misleading if it included new assertions of fact but only used past statements by that individual and failed to identify them as such.

19. *Use of Sound*: WKSU journalists will use only authentic sound recorded at the stated location. WKSU journalists will not use canned sound effects (for example those purchasable online or in CD form) unless for obvious comic or satirical purposes (for instance on a bloopers reel or for an April Fools piece or program), or unless they are identified as pre-produced sound effects. Any questions as to the appropriateness of sound or sound effects should be taken to one's supervisor. The sound of sirens, or car horns, will not be used on air on WKSU. Any exceptions will require prior approval from the news director.

There will be situations where sound design is appropriate for a specific story or project, such as a feature or podcast. WKSU journalists and producers should consult with their

editor(s) to decide on the situations in which that is appropriate. Music and sound design should only be used in situations in which they enhance the story.

20. *Online:* The same ethical and editorial standards for radio journalism also apply to online journalism, including social media. Photographs and video can be used from WKSU reporters or from third parties who have provided the material and given WKSU permission, in writing, to use the photos. All photos/videos must be properly credited to the person and/or their agency. Permission from the third party can be granted via email. All permissions will be archived by the news director.

Third-party photographs and video in the public domain, or material available under the terms of “Fair Use” will not require permission. Third party photographs or videos from sharing cites such as Creative Commons are acceptable, provided WKSU abides by the terms under which the material is made available.

Potentially libelous material and offensive language must be vetted through proper channels. The basic rule is this: if the content on the website were translated into a radio transmission, it has to pass the standards set out in these ethics guidelines.

21. *Sexual assaults:* WKSU does not name victims of sexual assaults. There will, at times, be exceptions – such as certain instances when a victim goes public with his/her identity – and WKSU supervisors will judge these instances on a case-by-case basis.

Chapter 4: Independence

The goal of WKSU's coverage is to be fair, unbiased, accurate, complete, honest and transparent. WKSU's journalists are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that leaves no question about WKSU's independence and impartiality. WKSU must treat the people it covers and the listeners it serves with respect. This includes gathering and reporting news with neither fear nor favor. WKSU will not show favoritism to any outside forces, including advertisers, donors, sources, story subjects, powerful individuals, and special interest groups. The station will also resist those who would seek to buy or politically influence news content or who would seek to intimidate those gathering news.

1. *Firewalls inside and outside of the station:* WKSU staff members are to determine news content through editorial judgment and not as the result of undue outside influence. Community input is encouraged but decisions about story choice is independent. WKSU should resist any self-interest or peer pressure that might erode journalistic duty and service to the public.

2. *Sponsorship:* Sponsorship and Underwriting of WKSU programming will not be used in any way to restrict or manipulate content.

3. *University management:* WKSU is a licensee of Kent State University. WKSU values being a part of Kent State University. At the same time, it is beneficial to both the station and the university that WKSU's editorial content is seen as being truly independent and that there is no perception of any undue efforts to influence or control its content or programming. Both the station and the university are best served by clearly stating this as policy.

With all the stories they cover, WKSU journalists attempt to contact all parties to ensure their position are taken into consideration in properly reporting the story. With any story of a sensitive nature concerning the university, WKSU News will attempt to reach the university for a response before airing and/or publishing the story. WKSU's news director or, in his/her absence, a designee will alert WKSU senior management ahead of time of all stories concerning the university.

4. *Funders:* A firewall will be maintained between WKSU journalists and funders. While staff will inevitably end up talking to individuals who contribute to the station and experts and officials who work at organizations that fund the station, coverage will maintain editorial autonomy. If WKSU reports on an organization or individual who funds the station, WKSU will disclose that relationship on air in the unusual case where the subject of the report is *directly related* to the funding provided by the organization or individual. If reporting concerns a WKSU funder, WKSU's news director or his/her designee will alert senior management head of time.

5. *Promotional activities:* WKSU journalists may take part or be asked to take part in promotional activities or events involving supporters of WKSU, such as our coordinated fund drives or major donor events.

6. *Partnerships:* WKSU seeks to be engaged in our communities and, as such, is willing to collaborate with other media outlets to build partnerships with other organizations that can help fulfill its mission, serve its listeners and the community. WKSU shall approach such endeavors with the idea that it will not engage in partnerships that would, in any way, undermine the station's editorial independence or credibility. WKSU will not create content with organizations that have a strong advocacy position on issues that the station covers.

Chapter 5: Conflict of Interest

All journalists need to be aware of and avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived.

A conflict of interest in its simplest dictionary term is a conflict between private interests and the professional responsibilities of a person in a position of trust. An operative word in this sentence is “trust.” All of us are in positions of trust when it comes to both our audience and the people and institutions that we cover. To maintain that trust requires that there be no real or perceived overlap between the private interests and opinions of WKSU journalists and their professional responsibilities.

WKSU journalists are responsible for disclosing potential conflicts of interest to their supervisor at the time they are first assigned to cover or work on a matter. The supervisor will decide whether the interests create an actual or perceived conflict of interest.

Additionally, as employees of Kent State University, WKSU Journalists are considered state employees. All state employees are subject to the Ohio Ethics Commission. Details on conflicts of interest can be found at <https://ethics.ohio.gov/education/coi.html>.

1. *Financial Relationships:* Journalists may not enter into business or financial relationships with their sources. Similarly, journalists may not cover individuals or institutions with which they have a financial relationship. An exception includes a journalist’s investment in mutual funds or pension funds that are invested by fund managers in a broad range of companies.

2. *Personal Relationships:* Activities of family members may create conflicts of interest. WKSU recognizes that it has no authority to restrict the activities of spouses, companions or close relatives of WKSU staff members who do not themselves work for the station. However, the station may restrict a staff member’s assignment based on the activities of a family member or loved one. Staff members are responsible for informing a supervisor whenever a companion’s or close relative’s activities, investments or affiliations could create a conflict. The definition of a family member for this policy is the same as the definition of “Immediate family” in chapter 102.01 of the Ohio Revised Code, meaning “a spouse residing in the person’s household and any dependent child.”

3. *Perquisites (meals, travel, review items, gifts, tickets and admission):* As a principle, WKSU journalists pay their own way, and will be reimbursed by WKSU for professional expenses. However, news gathering often occurs in settings where payment is awkward or impossible. When that happens, WKSU journalists should make every effort to reciprocate as soon as possible. Let common sense and good manners be the guide.

It is WKSU’s policy to reimburse organizations that provide meals or refreshments to journalists covering events they sponsor. WKSU’s journalists may also simply decline meals or refreshments at events they cover.

WKSU also pays for travel by staff members on assignment. They may not accept free or discounted transportation or accommodations unless the same discount is available to the public. Exceptions may arise when the travel is for professional development and is paid for by an organization dedicated to journalistic excellence, such as the Poynter Institute. Exceptions may also arise when access to a news event or source can be gained no other way. A journalist covering a military or scientific expedition, for example, may have no reasonable method to pay for travel. Those arrangements should, however, be the exception and must be approved in advance in writing by the News Director and Program Director.

The station receives countless unsolicited items, such as books, CDs and food, to review or cover. They are tantamount to news releases. Accordingly, staff members may keep such items for reference, share them with other staff members, donate them to charity or throw them away. No staff member may sell or otherwise profit by review materials.

Staff members are prohibited from accepting gifts from or giving gifts to news sources, potential news sources or those who seek to influence coverage. There may be some exceptions when reporting in countries and cultures where refusing to accept or provide a modest gift would give offense. When in doubt about the appropriateness of a gift, ask a supervisor.

Staff members attending cultural and sporting events purely for private enjoyment may not use their affiliation with WKSU to gain access or to avoid paying.

4. *Awards:* Staff members should enter their work only in contests whose central purpose is to recognize journalistic excellence. WKSU does not participate in contests that exist primarily to publicize or further the cause of an organization. Under no circumstances may staff members accept awards from groups they cover. A staff member who is offered an award should consult his or her supervisor before accepting it.

5: *Disclosure:* If a conflict of interest is unavoidable, it should be disclosed to our audience.

Chapter 6: Outside Activity

WKSU journalists should recognize that they are accountable for their actions to the public, the profession, and themselves.

1. Public Appearances: Staff members are generally encouraged to speak to civic and community organizations about the station's mission and goals. It is also appropriate to appear as a panel moderator or panelist. WKSU acknowledges that outside appearances can enhance the reputation of the station. All participation must be approved ahead of time by WKSU's Program Director, News Director and Marketing Director.

WKSU journalists must get written permission from a supervisor to appear on TV or other media. It is not necessary to get permission in each instance when the employee is a regular participant on an approved show. In appearing on TV or other media, WKSU journalists should not express views they would not air in their role as journalists on WKSU's programs.

WKSU journalists are permitted to engage in promotional activities for books they have written (such as a book tour), or for outside projects such as documentaries. They are expected to get written approval from their supervisor. WKSU programs are permitted to interview employees about books they have written, or other projects they have produced, if that material meets the same criteria applied to work by non-WKSU employees. The employee(s) in question should not be involved in the decision-making process of whether to do an interview, and careful consideration must be given to the appearance of favoritism. Plans to interview WKSU employees about such books or projects should be approved in writing by the News Director and Program Director who will make the final decision. The author must be identified as a WKSU employee during the course of the interview or program.

There are some situations where a public appearance may not be advisable.

WKSU journalists may not speak in settings where their appearance is being used by an organization to market its services or products, unless it is marketing WKSU's interests.

WKSU journalists may not speak to groups where the journalist's appearance might put in question his or her impartiality. Such instances include situations where the employee's appearance may appear to endorse the agenda of a group or organization, or be seen as opposition to an advocate with a particular political viewpoint (such as a point/counterpoint panel with a political advocate).

WKSU journalists are discouraged from accepting honoraria or speaking fees. They may only accept speaking fees from organizations or groups not engaged in significant lobbying or political activity. Determining whether a group engages in significant lobbying or political activity is the responsibility of the journalist. Supervisors will determine whether a journalist can accept a fee.

2. *Freelancing:* The primary responsibility of WKSU journalists is to gather, write, edit or produce news for WKSU. WKSU journalists are allowed to contribute stories, audio or other journalistic projects to affiliated organizations and programs, such as NPR, APM, and Marketplace. Staff members should consult with WKSU's News Director before pitching a story to an outside program. The journalist may retain all payments. This should not conflict with their work on WKSU stories and where appropriate the story should be revised and repurposed locally on WKSU. If the network contacts a reporter, they should consult with news director before committing to the story.

WKSU journalists must get written permission for all other types of outside freelance or journalistic work. Requests should be submitted to the employee's supervisor. Approval will not be given if the proposed work will discredit WKSU, conflict with the station's interests, create a conflict of interest for the employee or interfere with the employee's ability to perform WKSU duties.

WKSU journalists may not engage in advocacy, paid or unpaid.

3. *What constitutes representing the station:* Any programming staff member who is engaged in an activity in a public sphere, who makes it known they work at WKSU, is then representing the station, whether directly or indirectly. Just using your name can constitute making it known that you work at the station. Common sense should be the guide here.

Other staff members not working in programming should also consider the repercussions of making their employment known when they are engaged in public activities and seek to avoid any appearance of conflicts of interest.

Chapter 7: Participating in Public Life

There is no desire to unduly restrict staff members' exercise of the rights and duties of citizenship. But we must recognize that the reputation of WKSU is important to us all, and that a full discussion of possible conflict is essential to avoiding public embarrassment.

1. *Political office:* WKSU journalists may not run for office, endorse candidates or otherwise engage in politics. Since contributions to candidates are part of the public record, WKSU journalists may not contribute to political campaigns, as doing so would call into question a journalist's impartiality in coverage.
2. *Campaigning:* WKSU journalists may not participate in marches and rallies involving controversial causes or issues, nor should they sign petitions or otherwise lend their name to such causes, or contribute money to them. Questions or concerns as to what constitutes a controversial cause should be brought to one's supervisor.
3. *Government service:* WKSU journalists may not serve on government boards or commissions.
4. *Non-profit work:* WKSU journalists may sit on community advisory boards, educational institution trustee boards, boards of religious organizations or boards of nonprofit organizations so long as they are not engaged in significant lobbying or political activity or advocacy. Such activities should be disclosed to the News Director and Program Director. WKSU may revoke approval if it believes continued service will create the appearance of a conflict of interest or an actual conflict.
5. *Family members:* When a spouse, family member or companion of a WKSU journalist is involved in political activity, the journalist should be sensitive to the fact that this could create real or perceived conflicts of interest. In such instances the WKSU journalist should advise the News Director and Program Director to determine whether s/he should recuse him or herself from a certain story or certain coverage.
6. *Voicing opinions:* WKSU journalists should avoid espousing viewpoints on public issues, whether they're working at the time or not. Examples can range from wearing an anti-nuclear button while covering a rally to writing a letter to the editor for your local paper. Staff members should avoid having bumper stickers or otherwise identifying themselves with causes they are expected to cover. This includes political yard signs. Reporters and editors should be aware that such blatant espousal casts doubt upon their impartiality. Staff members should also refrain from expressing viewpoints on public issues using their WKSU email accounts. WKSU email messages are subject to the state's open records law although certain kinds of correspondence *involving sources* are protected by the state's shield law (Ohio Revised Code § 2739.04).

Chapter 8: Social Media Guidelines

WKSU requires its journalists to participate on social media platforms as part of their daily responsibilities. The core platforms for participation are determined by the News Director, Program Director and other WKSU staff involved with the direction of the station's social media strategy. Posting to social media calls for a level of personal interaction. However, at all times, WKSU news staff must be aware of and pay heed to the line between offering objective comments and engaging in advocacy and inappropriate behavior. This is true whether participating through official station accounts or through your own accounts. A good mindset to follow: think before you post.

Guidelines for station accounts:

1. Be objective – don't offer opinions on controversial subjects that could put the station in the position of being perceived as having a bias.
2. Be respectful when responding to comments and replies. Always keep the station's best interest in mind.
3. Make sure that a post adds value to the station's online presence. Even if you believe a post or repost will garner "likes", a post that is off-brand is not appropriate.

Guidelines for personal accounts:

1. If you have personal social media accounts, make it explicitly clear that your posts, thoughts and any opinions offered are wholly your own, not representative of WKSU.
2. You may identify yourself as being with WKSU, but once you do, you will need to follow the same guidelines for station accounts.
3. You are welcome and encouraged to post information related to WKSU on your account.
4. Do not post confidential or proprietary station information.
5. Use common sense in posting.

The final word is that it is important whether posting on a station or personal account, it is incumbent to use good judgment.

Chapter 9: Accountability

Application of and accountability to this code is the responsibility in the first instance of every WKSU journalist. This responsibility extends to every other WKSU journalist with whom he/she works. We should feel free to guide ourselves by offering suggestions to our peers to help them comply with their obligations under this code.

WKSU News Code of Ethics

Chapter 10: Endorsement

The WKSU News Code of Ethics is meant to ensure that there are clearly articulated standards that all of WKSU's journalists follow. These standards demonstrate the high value WKSU places on accuracy, fairness and transparency.

Kent State University affirms its responsibility to operate WKSU in the public interest as a public trustee of an asset belonging to the American people. As a trustee, it must enable professional management to operate in a way that will give the public full confidence in the editorial integrity of our programming. We believe that WKSU's broadcasting activities best benefit Kent State University when they are perceived to be independent, honest, and of the highest quality.

Endorsement of the WKSU News Code of Ethics:

Karen Clarke
Senior Vice President
University Relations
Kent State University
Representing the university

Wendy Turner
General Manager
WKSU
Representing the staff of WKSU

Chair, WKSU Community Advisory Committee
Representing WKSU's C.A.C.

WKSU News Code of Ethics

Chapter 11: Understanding and Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I have received and read WKSU's Code of Ethics and agree to abide by its standards. I understand that failure to follow this code may involve disciplinary action up to and including termination of my employment.

Please print, sign and return this page to WKSU's program director.

Signature

Print Name

Date